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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Measures to expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions, including the use of fair and transparent recruitment procedures and monitoring mechanisms

Report of the Secretary General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 18 of General Assembly resolution 57/290 B of 18 June 2003, in which the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to report on measures that would expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions and their accountability in that regard, including the use of fair and transparent recruitment procedures and monitoring mechanisms.

The report outlines the measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to expedite all aspects of staffing, describes current staffing policies and procedures and reports on the progress made towards meeting the standards of expeditiousness, competitiveness, fairness and transparency in the recruitment process.

* The present report was submitted late owing to the strain put on the limited resources of the Personnel Management and Support Service by the ongoing surge in planning and deployment of new peacekeeping missions.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B, in which the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to report on measures that would expedite recruitment for field missions, taking into account the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions and their accountability in that regard, including the use of fair and transparent staffing procedures and monitoring mechanisms.

2. For the purposes of the present report, the term "staffing" is used to denote both the recruitment of external candidates as well as the assignment of serving staff to field missions. The report outlines the measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to expedite staffing, describes current staffing policies and procedures and reports on the progress made in meeting the standards of expeditiousness, competitiveness, fairness and transparency in recruitment. Additionally, it describes and assesses established policies pertaining to the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions, namely the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET).

II. Staffing of field missions

3. In order to meet the concern of the General Assembly with regard to the efficient staffing of field missions (see resolution 57/290 B, para. 18), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed and gradually implemented a more competitive, transparent and fair staffing and selection process.

4. In developing its staffing procedures, while mindful of the importance of fielding staff in a timely and efficient manner in order to meet operational requirements and mission mandated responsibilities, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has drawn on the provisions and spirit of documents ST/SGB/277, ST/AI/404 and ST/AI/2002/4 further to enhance procedures for the recruitment, selection and reassignment of civilian field personnel.

5. In keeping with the Organization's overall human resources policies and goals, candidate selections are made on a competitive basis, with due regard to competence, performance records, skills (including language skills and competencies), suitable experience, gender balance and geographical diversity within the respective mission. Competitiveness and transparency have been enhanced through the institution of comparative evaluation processes. The greater involvement of mission management in selection decisions holds them accountable for the timely and efficient delivery of outputs.

6. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations staffing process, which will continue to be streamlined to meet evolving needs, has at its heart the objective of recruiting and retaining high quality personnel to staff peace support operations worldwide. It aims at striking a balance between the needs of the Organization for a multi-skilled, versatile work force, the needs of field missions for energetic, experienced and innovative personnel and the aspirations of individual staff members for career development.

7. Since January 2002, internal and external vacancy announcements, either generic or specific, have gradually become the vehicle for filling vacant posts, particularly in missions that are in their maintenance phase. The establishment of generic job profiles for the majority of mission posts has permitted the consistent presentation of job requirements as well as the systematic evaluation of candidates' qualifications, skills and competencies. Since January 2002, some 1,500 vacancy announcements at the Professional level and some 350 at the Field Service and support levels have been issued on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site.

8. It is worth noting that overall global vacancy rates fell from 23 per cent in 2002 to 13 per cent in November 2003, with some missions in single digits. In February 2004, however, further to the increase in authorized post levels for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), the vacancy rate rose to almost 26 per cent.

9. The circulation of the majority of mission vacancies on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site is designed to provide a transparent and competitive means for the selection of staff. For posts in highly technical occupational groups, targeted searches may be undertaken through access to less traditional sources of recruitment, such as, inter alia, professional associations and national recruitment agencies. For junior support categories, a decision may be taken to rotate or reassign a serving staff member to the vacancy.

10. An integral part of the staffing function is the involvement and substantive role of the field mission throughout the recruitment process. The field mission management will determine, in cooperation with the Personnel Management and Support Service, the job requirements prior to the advertisement of posts and will ultimately select personnel from technically cleared shortlists.

11. In preparing shortlists of qualified candidates for selection by the field mission, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations gives preference to qualified serving staff members of the Secretariat and field missions over the recruitment of external candidates. This corresponds to the Organization's policy outlined in document ST/AI/404, encouraging mobility among Secretariat staff, and the policy contained in document ST/SGB/277, governing a staff member's assignment to, and return from, mission service.

12. These policies promote mobility between duty stations and field missions and enhance career development opportunities for staff. They acknowledge the value and relevance of the skills acquired by serving United Nations staff. They also allow the Organization to retain staff who have benefited from the various training programmes and courses provided.

13. The reduction of approximately 1,000 posts in peace operations from June 2001 to the end of March 2003 placed constraints on the career and mobility opportunities of all categories of serving staff and limited the number of employment opportunities for external applicants. Within operational, budgetary and administrative constraints, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has given priority consideration to qualified field staff from downsizing, liquidating and liquidated missions for placement into other operations.

14. In the light of recent global developments, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations anticipates a surge in peacekeeping operations in 2004. Specifically, the Department anticipates several new missions in Africa and the Caribbean in addition

to meeting current staff requirements in Liberia (UNMIL) and the possibility of an expanded role in Côte d'Ivoire (the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)), Cyprus (the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus), Afghanistan (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and Iraq (the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)).

15. With the likely increase in peacekeeping operations, it is anticipated that personnel requirements for expanded and future missions may result in approximately 2,000 new positions, representing a significant increase in staffing levels from a year ago.

III. Enhancements to Department of Peacekeeping Operations staffing mechanisms

A. Mission planning

16. Further to ensure a coordinated approach to all aspects of mission support, multidimensional Department of Peacekeeping Operations teams take part in mission planning, technical assessment missions and management reviews.

B. Succession planning

17. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultation with field missions, is working closely to plan for, forecast and manage staffing requirements more effectively. Reports highlighting vacancies resulting from expected retirements and known departures are prepared and reviewed against staff in need of placement owing to downsizing or liquidations.

C. Rapid deployment

18. In February 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations launched the rapid deployment roster, requesting interested Department staff to nominate themselves, via an e-application form, to be available for mission deployment for a period of up to three months. In total, over 6,500 staff members applied for the roster, with a pool of 637 eligible staff members available for team placement.

19. As of June 2003, 283 staff on the rapid deployment roster had been placed against 120 critical mission functions, of which 45 were immediately deployed for start-up activities in UNAMI, MINUCI and UNMIL. While the primary purpose of the roster was to facilitate the more efficient start-up of new missions and to allow time for the recruitment process to take place, the mechanism has also been valuable to assist surge staffing in special missions and in targeting liquidation activities. A second, enhanced rapid deployment roster is planned for the first half of 2004, incorporating many of the lessons learned from the first roster.

D. Vacancy tracking

20. In June 2003, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations implemented part one of an online vacancy tracking and reporting system which enables the Organization to track, monitor and report on all vacancies and staffing actions once

a decision to fill a post has been made. This system merges data from all currently existing databases, providing a comprehensive platform for accurate decision-making and monitoring with regard to the status of staffing actions.

21. The vacancy tracking tool is expected to facilitate further the planning and monitoring of mission vacancy rates and the timely filling of posts.

E. Human Resources Handbook

22. Further to guide mission management and staff in ensuring proper implementation of policies and procedures relating to recruitment in field missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed a draft Human Resources Handbook, which is online and user-friendly.

F. Vacancy announcement compendium

23. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations continues to work with the Office of Human Resources Management in refining and streamlining the Galaxy recruitment system for the advertisement of field mission posts. So far, the Department has been unable to use Galaxy fully since the search mechanisms do not allow for refined and sophisticated searches. The system has now been upgraded and is currently being tested. In the interim, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations introduced a pilot vacancy announcement compendium in November 2003. The compendium is an Intranet-based e-application tool to advertise current and projected vacancies in the Professional and Field Service categories in a timely fashion, identifying qualified internal staff for service in field missions as a first priority.

24. Galaxy is an important interface linking the electronic personal history profiles to applications submitted for specific internal vacancies announced under the vacancy announcement compendium. This link simplifies the application process by eliminating duplicate data entry of personal history profiles data.

25. The vacancy announcement compendium, which is open to all staff in the global Secretariat, is designed to enhance and expedite the staffing and application process and the planning of mission staffing. While the pilot compendium was open to internal staff only, future instalments of the compendium will be open to external candidates as well.

26. The vacancy announcement compendium offers a complementary staffing tool from which pre-cleared candidates can be drawn, in particular during surges in field operations. The pilot compendium, which contained the most urgent, critical and voluminous vacancies, was launched for a two-week period and included 81 field positions, of which 66 were for Professional posts covering a broad range of occupational areas. The Personnel Management and Support Service received a total of 7,735 applications from 1,973 staff.

27. It is anticipated, subject to the availability of sufficient numbers of qualified candidates in the respective occupational groups, that pre-cleared shortlists of candidates can be made available to field missions once a vacancy is forecasted. Vacancy announcement compendium shortlists can also be used to fill unforeseen vacancies resulting from resignations, reassignments or non-extension of contracts

quickly. Qualified candidates, pre-screened and technically cleared, who are not selected for a particular vacancy will remain on the compendium roster for a one-year period and will be given priority consideration for future vacancies.

28. An analysis of results generated by the pilot vacancy announcement compendium indicates that it can provide useful trends for human resource planning and post management in terms of sufficient levels of resources or shortfalls in specific occupational groups.

IV. Extension of delegation of recruitment authority to field missions

29. The authority to initiate recruitment of substantive international staff within the governance component was granted to UNMIK in July 2000 and UNMISET in January 2001 on a pilot basis. In these two pilots, the delegation of recruitment authority has improved the timeliness of recruitment, in particular during large-scale surges. This delegation has empowered the programme managers at the field level and increased simultaneously their level of accountability.

30. The outcome was positive overall in both cases largely as a result of the dedicated cell that was established with the deployment of qualified recruitment specialists.

31. In terms of monitoring the delegation of authority, the Personnel Management Support Service has carried out several assist visits to a number of field missions. These visits were aimed at monitoring the correct application of human resources policies and procedures related in particular to processes delegated to the missions and at providing advice or remedial actions, as relevant. The Office of Human Resources Management has also undertaken regular monitoring visits to the various peacekeeping operations to ensure missions' compliance in carrying out delegated functions, including in the area of recruitment.

32. Further delegation of recruitment and staffing authority to the field missions is pending the completion of standard operating guidelines on the revised staffing procedures, sufficient qualified recruitment specialists for all field missions and the institution of appropriate administrative monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at Headquarters.

V. Conclusion

33. Since 2002, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has made significant improvements in the staffing practices governing peacekeeping operations. In keeping with the goals of the Organization's human resources reform programme, the Department's staffing practices and procedures will continue to be assessed and modified, as required, to meet evolving needs.

VI. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

34. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Greater use of national staff in field missions

Report of the Secretary General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B of 18 June 2003, which requests the Secretary-General to encourage greater use of national staff, as defined in paragraph 80 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, whenever possible and cost-effective.

The report outlines the policy governing the use of national professional officers in field missions, recalls the background of that practice and describes the officers' current deployment in peacekeeping operations.

* The lateness of the report submission is caused by the strain put on the limited resources of the Personnel Management and Support Service by the ongoing surge in planning and deployment of new peacekeeping missions.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B (para. 17), which requests the Secretary-General to encourage greater use of national staff in peacekeeping operations.

2. For the purposes of the report, the term "national staff" is used to denote national professional officers (NPOs) and national general service staff. The report recalls the policy governing the use of NPOs in field missions, the current status in the use of national staff in general and the way forward for an efficient use of national staff in field missions.

II. Policy governing the use of national professional officers in field missions

3. The use of national professional officers is governed by specific criteria approved by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which were outlined in annex VI of the ICSC 1994 report (A/49/30) and adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/223 of 23 December 1994. The policy stipulates, in particular, that NPOs should be nationals of the country where they are to serve and should not be subject to assignment to any duty station outside those countries.

4. The use of staff in the NPO category is limited to functions which have a national content and which require national experience and knowledge of local culture, language traditions and institutions (see A/49/30, annex VI). The report specifically indicates that NPOs should be employed in accordance with the stated criteria and not merely as a convenient substitute for international professionals. (Ibid., para. 235).

5. The use of NPOs was approved by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM); subsequently, on 23 December 2003, authority was delegated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to recruit NPOs in governance-oriented missions. The greater use of NPOs in governance missions was considered both necessary and desirable in view of the expanded field of activities entrusted to those missions, which require national experience and local knowledge. OHRM noted that the recruitment of NPOs by DPKO should be carried out in accordance with the criteria approved by the ICSC and endorsed by the General Assembly.

III. Background and recent developments

6. As at January 2004, a total of 9,231 national posts had been approved and established in peacekeeping and other field missions. That number includes both NPO posts (306) and national general services posts (8,925).

7. National general service staff are represented in all components of every mission, encompassing the political and other substantive components and all the administrative and logistical areas. They are recruited as secretaries, administrative assistants, technicians, transport or information technology assistants and public information or language assistants.

8. In 1995 NPOs were first employed in the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) as human rights officers. Two years later NPO positions were established in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in connection with the Judicial System Assessment Project and later on in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), whose mandate in governance and public administration was particularly suited for the use of national expertise.

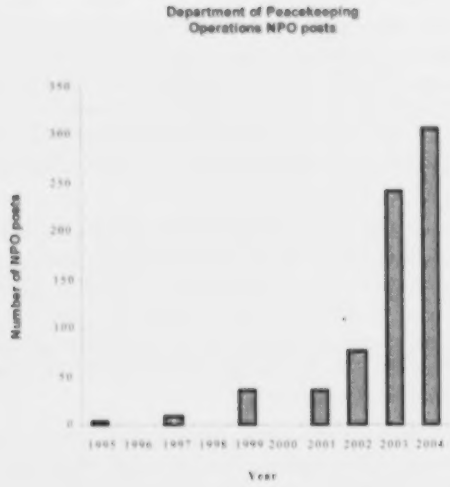
9. Depending on circumstances particular to the specific mission, every effort is made to include as many national posts as possible. The scope and magnitude of the national component is subject to the availability of locally qualified and skilled personnel and, in the case of NPOs, to the number of posts that require national experience and local knowledge as well as to such factors as confidentiality and possible conflicts of interest. The particular circumstances are usually considered during the technical assessment missions.

10. Within the overall framework of the national staff, NPOs stand as a distinct category of staff, as evidenced by the policy governing their recruitment and the limitations attached to the areas where they can be employed.

11. The employment of national staff, including NPOs, was expanded with the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The staff, with their knowledge of local culture, language traditions and institutions, provide key support in the implementation of the mission's mandate. For example, within the political affairs sector, national staff have been deployed in teams to each of the eight regions of the country to assist international political and civil affairs officers in maintaining contacts at the district and local levels. The increased utilization of national staff also serves the goal of strengthening national capacity and development, providing national staff with the opportunity to contribute directly to reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

IV. Current status

12. As at January 2004, DPKO data, shown below, indicated that 306 national professional officer posts had been authorized in eight peacekeeping and special political missions: the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Liberia.



V. Conclusion

13. Overall, the experience of using national staff in the various missions has been positive. Feedback received from field missions indicates that NPOs have generally produced high quality work in their area of competence. Their knowledge of local institutions, culture and language has proved especially helpful. The staff is of high calibre, and they are well-educated, experienced and professional. For example, the impact of the national indigenous officers in Guatemala was particularly valuable, precisely because they came from an ethnic background similar to that of the population groups with whom they worked. All missions that currently have NPOs have indicated their interest in maintaining and expanding this particular expertise. Some missions, however, have encountered difficulties in identifying suitable national staff as a result of United Nations language requirements. For example, the number of national applicants for NPO posts at the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was limited, as knowledge of one of the working languages of the United Nations was required.

14. The number and quality of national staff in field missions at both the professional and general service levels is testimony to the commitment of the Organization and of DPKO in particular to support and spearhead the greater use of these categories of staff. The greater use of NPOs in peacekeeping operations is limited by the conditions governing their employment, namely the requirement that their use be restricted to functions which have a national content and which require national experience and knowledge. However, within that framework, it has been possible to increase significantly the use of NPOs in such missions as UNMIK and UNAMA, where there has been a demand for national expertise and local knowledge. In staffing missions in the future, DPKO will use the experience gained at UNMIK and UNAMA to expand the use of NPOs where feasible and cost-effective.

15. The Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are closely monitoring the use of national professional

officers within the framework of the delegation of authority mentioned in paragraph 5. The currently applied criteria (see paragraph 4) may be further reviewed with OHRM and other partners as relevant to allow the Secretariat, and DPKO in particular, to be in a better position to develop flexible and creative staffing strategies in order to expand the use of NPOs in field missions.

VI. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

16. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the report.**